

# CLARKE COUNTY

## Honorable William E. Kimbrough

Clarke County Courthouse  
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## PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enhance the services of Clarke County Regional Children's Advocacy Center
2. To provide a family resource center to facilitate parent training and support
3. To provide a therapeutic alternative school program to deter adolescents from crime and substance abuse

# Issues

*Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county.*

## **Health - Children's (0 - 19)** physical and mental well-being in the county.

### **To target children ages birth to 19 years who are at risk for physical health deficits**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- to provide education to promote healthy eating habits thereby reducing the incidence of eating disorders such as anorexia and obesity

### **To target children ages birth-19 who are at-risk for behavioral crisis**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- to employ licensed social workers/nurse case managers to provide case management services to grades K-12.
- to provide parenting seminars for families of at risk children ages 3-19 years.
- increase staff

## **Safety - Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.**

### **To enhance the services of Clarke County Regional Children's Advocacy Center**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support state legislated appropriations for Alabama Network of CAC's
- to familiarize council and community of CAC services and create local and grant funding resources
- help with renovations of newly purchased CAC facility

### **Make expert child abuse medical exams available to children from rural Clarke County Alabama**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support development of telemedicine in Clarke County
- educate the council and community on the benefits of evidence collection through telemedicine
- help locate sources of funding for telemedicine within the county and through grants

### **Make children safer in motor vehicles**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- encourage law officials to enforce child restraint laws
- develop heightened community awareness of dangers of leaving children alone in motor vehicles
- inform community to report to DHR and/or law enforcement incident of children in unsafe situations regarding motor vehicles such as lack of restraints, left in car, riding with impaired driver

## **Education - Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.**

### **To provide a therapeutic alternative school program to deter adolescents from crime and substance abuse**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- to investigate the feasibility of opening a therapeutic alternative school in Clarke County
- to investigate the Compass School in Escambia County as a possible model for a therapeutic alternative school

### **To develop a program offering alternative to college for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- to offer a career day focusing on vocational, technical, and military training.
- to rotate this training annually among high school hosts.
- to offer a program to improve testing skills.

## Early Care and

**Education** - Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

**To provide education and community awareness for children in daycare/preschool stages**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- utilize existing childcare programs
- interagency collaboration
- support early childcare programs as well as promote childcare training

**To promote that all children have access to quality preschool care and education**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- increase resources from birth to six years
- increase services in high-risk communities
- provide child development information incorporated into K-12 classes for potential teen parents

## Economic Security

- Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

**Enable more parents on welfare to secure and maintain employment**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- work with ATRC to provide transportation for children to daycare
- work with county commissioners and ATRC in creating a transportation committee to expand transportation services in rural areas
- locate more placement resources for DHR's JOB clients

**Clarke County to focus on community and industrial development**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- focus on needs of children in community development especially quality of life issues
- ensure several Children's Policy Council members are on board of Clarke County Development Foundation
- ensure members actively serve on foundation committees

**Prepare youth for job market**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- develop summer job program for Clarke County
- encourage job readiness classes become part of school curriculum
- develop program to provide money for transportation, uniforms, clothing, lunches for youth on summer job programs when needed

## Parent Involvement and Skills

- Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

**To provide a family resource center to facilitate parent training and support**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- investigate need for parent training and support for families of juvenile delinquents
- to investigate the Hope Place in Escambia County and Rainbow House in Conecuh county as possible models for this program
- to investigate the "Parent Project," "Journey to Freedom," and "Parenting out of control Teenagers"

**To provide substance abuse treatment for adults in Clarke County to reduce the incidences of child abuse and neglect**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- to assess the need for substance abuse treatment in Clarke County.
- investigate possible funding for substance abuse intensive outpatient program in Clarke County

## Policy Recommendation

1. Continue Medicaid funding for case managers through the Patient First care Coordination system
2. Appropriations be made to fund Child Advocacy Centers through the Alabama Network of Child Advocacy Centers
3. To cultivate funding for alternative/therapeutic education programs
4. Encourage law enforcement officials to enforce child restraint laws and provide for heavier penalties for adults who fail to comply with these laws
5. Provide a funding source for intensive outpatient services for adults with substance abuse issues as a means of preventing child abuse and neglect
6. Secure local resources to establish a family resource center

## Accomplishments

### CLARKE COUNTY REGIONAL CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

#### HISTORY OF AND GENERAL INFORMATION

In 1985 Bud Cramer, currently a U.S. Representative but then District Attorney for Madison County, was instrumental in the opening of the first CAC in the nation, in Huntsville, Al. It is now known as the National Children's Advocacy Center and has been a model for CAC's around the world. In 1996 The Children's Center of Clarke County, Inc. built a foster home, Almost Home, with plans to add a CAC in the future.

Due to finances this plan was placed on the back burner. Then in the summer of 2003, a group of Clarke County citizens were working toward establishing Telemedicine for the area and the idea was re-born that this area needed a CAC. The rural counties of Clarke, Washington and Choctaw did not have access to any CAC either because the existing CAC's were significantly distant or because other CAC's did not offer services to those outside their area.

In only one year, the Clarke County Regional Children's Advocacy Center/Telemedicine Planning Committee, with the support and dedication of the Children's Center Board Members, succeeded in planning, funding and creating a working CAC. This endeavor was a success in large part due to the interest and support of the District Attorney's office, (Spence Walker and Stephen Winters), Sheriff Jack Day and particularly the tireless efforts of Peggie Tucker the director of the Clarke County DHR. In 2004, The Clarke County Regional Children's Advocacy Center was made a pilot agency through the Alabama Network of Children's Advocacy Centers.

Initially the CAC activities were handled by professionals employed by the various agencies represented by the Multidisciplinary Team, specifically, DHR, law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals, and the District Attorney and Assistant District Attorney. Professionals were trained in Child Forensic

Interviewing at the National Children's Advocacy in Huntsville. Renovations were made to Almost Home to accommodate a child friendly interview room and an observation room, as well as a separate entrance for CAC children.

Thanks to a program development grant from the National Children's Alliance (NCA) a CAC Director was hired and began work March 1, 2005. Also, nine individuals in the three counties have been trained in forensic child interviewing. Recently two Multidisciplinary Team training events were held in Grove Hill and Chatom, and professionals from law enforcement, DHR, mental health, juvenile probation, the schools, the hospitals, the judiciary and the District Attorney's office, representing all three counties in the district participated. On April 13, 2005 the purchase of a house on Cobb Street in historical downtown Grove Hill was finalized. Once renovations have been complete the CAC will be housed at this location. The CAC will not only house the interview and observation room and director's office, but there will be a resource library with educational materials on parenting, prevention of child abuse and other information related to children. The CAC also hopes to provide parenting classes, group counseling and court preparation for children and non-offending family members. Prevention programs, such as "Someone to Talk To" which is a puppet show presented to third grade classes and community awareness programs, such as the April Blue Ribbon Campaign, are on-going now and as the CAC becomes more established will only increase.

In July of 2005 the CAC became an Associate Member of NCA and we are working toward full membership. The CAC is currently seeking funding through several grants in hopes of expanding our services in 2006. We hope to be able to have a victim advocate program and to provide some free counseling services at the CAC.

One of the most important goals of the CAC is not only to reduce trauma to the children but to increase prosecutions. With the combination of the CAC and the Multidisciplinary Team working hand-in-hand with law enforcement and the District Attorney the number of prosecutions of serious physical and sexual abuse cases should increase, and we have already seen evidence of this. In 2003 there were 10 cases of sexual abuse presented to the grand jury with 9 indictments, in 2004 there were also 10 cases presented with 7 indictments, and in 2005 the number of sexual abuse cases presented to the grand jury increased to 26 with 23 indictments. The way an interview and investigation are conducted, as well as how prepared a child and family are for testifying, has an impact on taking cases to court, thereby getting child abusers off the streets.